DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 167 012 HE 010 994

AUTHOR	Premfors, Rune I. T.
TITLE	The Politics of Higher Education in Sweden: Recent Developments (1976-1978). Yale Higher Education Research Group Working Paper 30.
INSTITUTION	Yale Univ., New Haven, Conn. Inst. for Social and Policy Studies.
SPONS AGENCY	Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
REPORT NO	YHERG-30
PUB DATE	Nov 78
NOTE	51p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Higher Education Research Group, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, 1732 Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Comparative Education; Educational History; *Educational Policy; Educational Trends; *Foreign Countries; Governance; Government Role; *Government School Relationship; *Higher Education; Historical Reviews; Policy Formation; Political Issues; *Political Power; *Postsecondary Education As a Field of Study; Research; Student Financial Aid; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS	*Sweden

ABSTRACT

One of a series of studies on higher education in different countries, this paper examines political developments in Sweden from 1976 to 1978 and their effects on higher education. In 1976, after 44 consecutive years of rule by the Social Democratic Party (except for about 100 days in 1936), the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were able to form a coalition government. The impact of the shift of government in the policy area of higher education is detailed, and the politics and policies of higher education in Sweden before September 1976 are briefly sketched. The new nonsocialist government largely continued the Social Democratic government's higher education policy; the only significant departure was the free sector which had the potential to jeopardize important aspects of the reform. Some changes brought about by the reform are inclusion on governing boards of members representing the public interest, decentralization of decision-making power from the central to regional and local levels in higher education, geographical dispersion of higher education, the guarantee to applicants of a place in certain study programs and disciplines, and increased linkage between education and research. The use of ad hoc commissions and appointment by the new leaders, and the government's behavior concerning student aid and research are examined. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED167012

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Yale
Zemi

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE POLITICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SWEDEN: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (1976-1978)

by

Rune I.T. Premfors*

YALE HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH GROUP

WORKING PAPER
YHERG-30

November 1978

* Rune I.T. Premfors
Associate in Research
Higher Education Research Group

The research reported in this paper has been part of the work conducted by the Yale Higher Education Research Group. It has been supported by research funds from the Lilly Endowment for the comparative study of academic organization and governance.

In the interest of fullest possible circulation of information and ideas, the Higher Education Research Group reproduces and distributes these Working Papers at the request of authors who are affiliated with the Group. The views expressed are those of the authors.

Content of this Working Paper is not for publication or for quotation without permission. A list of the Working Papers of the Group may be obtained from the address below.

Higher Education Research Group
Institution for Social and Policy Studies
Yale University
1732 Yale Station
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

HE 010 994

Introduction

The typical account of Swedish higher education policy has pointed to features such as centralized planning and administration, uniformity, stress on social equality, radical structural reforms, etc. As in many other areas of public policy, an international public has followed developments in Swedish higher education with disdain or with sympathy--seldom with indifference. And as in other policy areas the relative radicalism of Swedish policies for higher education has been attributed to the long reign of the Social Democratic Party--sometimes with due consideration to the small size, wealth and homogeneous population of the country.

Then in September of 1976, what many predicted, but few were really prepared for, occurred: the Social Democratic Party was ousted from power after having formed governments, alone or in coalition, for 44 consecutive years (apart from some hundred days in 1936). The analyses of the party's electoral defeat have pointed to a few general factors--an increasing identification of the party on the part of the voters with an all-powerful Establishment; a decreasing tendency of social class voting in Sweden; the economic crisis (although the country had so far done very well indeed in this respect); a growing interest of parts of the electorate in environmental problems (an area where the party had much less credibility than, in particular, the Center Party of the opposition)--which in combination with two sets of campaign issues (alleged "corruption" and nuclear energy) should provide a satisfactory explanation. In fact the single issue of nuclear energy was probably the decisive factor towards the end of the campaign. The leader of the Center Party, who also happened to be the designated prime minister should the non-socialist parties win, took a very firm and emotional stand against any use whatsoever of nuclear energy. This caused a small--but probably sufficient--number of Social Democratic voters to cast their votes for the

Center Party.[1] In October of 1976 that party, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were able to form a coalition government--the first in Sweden without the Social Democrats since the 1930s.[2]

One pertinent question is whether the coalition government brought about significant changes in public policy during its two-year reign, or whether, for instance, the forces of inertia and tradition in combination with economic difficulties (the severity of which became evident soon after the election) and, perhaps, inexperience on the part of the new power-holders, have impaired any policy departures. The limited aim of this paper is to investigate in relative detail the impact of the shift of government in the policy area of higher education. To what extent did policy change during the two years of the coalition government? What were the characteristic features of the political processes in this policy area? What factors can help explain policy developments in Swedish higher education in this period?[3]

To begin with, we find it useful to characterize briefly the politics and policies of higher education in Sweden before September 1976.

The Politics of Higher Education Before 1976

The traditional politics of higher education were characterized by policy-making by elites. Formally, of course, constitutional arrangements permitted the Swedish Riksdag, and thereby the political parties, to interfere with details of university life. Traditionally, however, universities were given considerable autonomy, and the necessary regulation at the national level was very much left to a handful of civil servants close to the minister of education, who constantly consulted the affected professors, deans and rectors. An interesting feature of the Swedish situation was the occasionally important role played in policy-making by students (organized at the national level as the National Union of Students, SFS). Particularly in matters such as

curricula, forms of instruction and the like, policy coalitions were, during the 1950s and 1960s, increasingly formed by SFS and ministry officials against the (at least in this regard) often conservative professors.[4]

In general, however, conflicts over policy were infrequent and minor and the Swedish parliament saw few reasons to intervene. One important reason for this state of affairs was obviously the limited scale of the whole operation: little money and few people were involved in higher education compared to other sectors of public activity. When the system began to grow rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, public attention grew correspcnsingly.[5] From 1960 onwards the Riksdag adopted long-term plans concerning mainly the quantitative developments of the sector. This did not, however, automatically lead to a politicization in the sense of party conflicts over policy. Rather, the general characteristic throughout most of the 1960s was broad consensus at the national level. It was a consensus which attributed all virtues to expansion: it would further economic growth, social equality, and cultural development. Although the investments were becoming considerable, and rapidly so, they would certainly give a handsome return in the future. Public policy meant to satisfy student and labor market demand by way of quantitative expansion, i.e. more of the same. Nobody of consequence seriously questioned the policy pursued so far where a numerus clausus applied to some, mostly professional, educational programs while the larger share of higher education programs were open to anyone with a certificate from upper-secondary education.[6]

The roots of growing politicization in the sense of party conflict during the 1970s are largely to be found inside the higher education system itself in the late 1960s. Sweden had its share, albeit limited in a comparative perspective, of student unrest in 1968, and also saw the general demand for more participation in decision-making on the part of earlier disenfranchised

groups. The policy response came quickly in the form of new rules of decision-making on an experimental basis (known by the acronym "FNYS").[7] In general the heightened level of conflict engendered a considerably greater public interest in problems of higher education. In the late 1960s some events and developments were found newsworthy by the mass media to the extent that they even hit the front pages of the big daily newspapers and found room in televised news. Meanwhile students and faculty--or, at least, the activists among them--tended in party political terms increasingly toward the "extremes," leaving the Center Party, the Social Democrats and, to some extent, the Liberals disproportionately weak in universities and colleges. The SFS became from the late 1960s dominated by conservative students but also had a sizeable marxist minority. The policy coalitions earlier referred to between students and central policy-makers were now, of course, much less probable. Increasingly the rather strange bedfellows of radical students and conservative faculty members found each other in common manifestations of opposition against government policy.

First and most directly affected by the heightened level of conflict was the Communist Party. They had so far not found it worthwhile to develop a comprehensive set of views on higher education. Now they definitely left the consensus by performing an analysis of the predicament of Swedish higher education in marxist terms--echoing in all important aspects views expressed by student radicals. Although not in such a blatant way, and only considerably later, both the Liberals and the Conservatives began to side with university opinion.

The catalyst of the increasing polarization between the political parties was the 1968 Educational Commission, better known as U68. The U68 had as its terms of reference to review the entire field of post-secondary education: notably its organization, size and geographical distribution. This was not

at the start a controversial thing; the only objection from the opposition parties at that time concerned the composition of the commission: they wanted it to be less influenced by top-level bureaucrats and correspondingly more responsive to members of parliament. As hinted at earlier, however, the relative consensus in higher education was largely broken during the five years of commission work. The Liberal Party and the conservatives echoed to some extent in U68 the criticism expressed in academia that the Commission was working on false premises: problems of quantity and organization were much less important than problems of quality. They pointed, for instance, to the fact that student numbers were actually, in a totally unpredicted fashion, decreasing in absolute terms in the universities.[8] In the main report from U68 the opposition parties chose to declare that they did not accept any responsibility for the proposals (although it was evident that the commission towards the end was working very much like any other ad hoc commission with MPs as members). In some instances, however, they stated contrasting views.[9]

As a result of the general elections of 1973 the Social Democratic government could not muster more than half of the votes in Parliament, even including those of the Communist Party. Since the latter was an extremely unreliable ally in matters of higher education policy, the government would be forced to woo one of the non-socialist opposition parties in order to secure a majority in the Riksdag for a reform bill. The prospects of a reform undertaken along the lines of the U68 report were in fact so bleak in the fall of 1973 that the government during a short period contemplated aborting the whole attempt. In the end, however, it was decided that the necessary concessions were to be made. A working party of parliamentarians was set up to prepare the government bill.[10] In this setting the government succeeded in rallying the support of the Center Party behind a set of proposals not too

different from those which had emanated from U68 a year earlier. A very critical idea was reintroduced (U68 had discarded it early in its work): the introduction of a new regional level. This fitted neatly with the Center Party ideas of regional development. The two other non-socialist parties were bitterly opposed to the proposal which they thought would only add to the bureaucratization of higher education. The proposal concerning regional boards was also important from the point of view of perhaps the most contested of all U68 proposals: the idea that "public interests" should constitute a majority on the governing boards of institutions. Now, however, orderly retreats could be made giving public representatives one-third of the seats on the boards of institutions and two-thirds of the seats on the regional boards.

The government bill discussed and decided upon in the Riksdag in May of 1975 contained the necessary compromises between the government and the Center Party. The latter were not entirely satisfied, however, concerning the part of the bill dealing with the issue of numerus clausus; a "softer" version was adopted in the education committee of the parliament. In only two cases out of 98 roll-calls did the Center Party side with the other two non-socialist parties. In only one instance did the three non-socialist parties win: the public representatives of the boards of institutions should be appointed by the county council and local authority councils where the institution was located, not by the central government as the bill had suggested.

The most important policy differences were the following. The Liberals, the Conservatives and the Communists objected in common to what they considered would be the creation of a numerus clausus for the entire system of higher education. Instead the aim for the future should be to widen the share of educational programs which would be open to all applicants with the basic qualifications. The Conservative Party and the Liberal Party both were strongly negative to the proposed regional boards. Both parties also objected

to what they considered to be a too thin geographical spread of higher education resources; distance education in combination with a Swedish Open University would do the job without endangering the quality of present institutions. The Conservatives alone expressed grave doubts about important aspects of the system of admission contained in the bill.

The decisions by the Riksdag in 1975 only constituted a framework for further preparations in view of higher education reform. In 1977 the final decisions were to be adopted. To work out the details, an elaborate committee structure was created with a central committee (known as "H75") and six regional ones. The chairmanships of these were distributed between the parties of the winning coalition, the Social Democrats and the Center Party. The proposals successively submitted by the H75 to the government during the ensuing year can be considered as having the political support of those two parties.

Higher Education policies have never figured prominently in any election campaign in Sweden--not even in the 1968 elections following closely upon the student unrest of that year. The general election of 1976 was no exception. The Conservative and Liberal leaders devoted one speech each to such problems while the others did not even once (to our knowledge) mention higher education issues. On a few occasions the party experts in the area took part in interviews or public debates. An evaluation of the material at hand reveals the same or perhaps in some instances even harsher opposition by Liberals and Conservatives to the 1975 Riksdag decision. Apart from their opposition to regional boards and to the allegedly "total" numerus clausus, they (and most strongly the Conservatives) wanted to stop many of the mergers of institutions proposed by H75, and--in order to make possible a redirection of the reform work towards more important qualitative problems--a postponement of the implementation of the reform for at least a year. Furthermore, the existing

proposals of H75 should be sent out to interested parties in a so-called remiss procedure, a very typical feature of public policy-making in the Swedish setting.

Higher Education Policy in the Process of Government Formation

The three parties needed close to three weeks of negotiations to agree upon the program and the ministers of the new government. Already at the initial, bilateral meetings between the Liberals and the Center Party it was realized that the policy area of higher education would be among the difficult problems. An early internal document lists the controversial aspects:

> Remiss procedure of H75 proposals? Means that reform is postponed for a year. Liberals against regional boards and total numerus clausus. Center Party took part in the decisions concerning U68 proposals, and has urged that places should be available so as to avoid numerus clausus.

In another document produced somewhat later during the first week of negotiations it is stated that the policy area of higher education requires "special arrangements." Apart from this the document promised a reform of student aid and more resources to university research. Only two other areas, family and energy policy, were said to be in need of special arrangements. In practice this implied the creation of special working groups. Such a group tried to settle the differences between the two parties in the area of higher education. These formulations were produced following a first session:

1. The Riksdag decision stands firm. Regional boards are created as decided.
2. System of admission. Clear and indisputable text concerning free access. Implies a review and revision of the system of admission proposed by H75.
3. Concerning all other matters we agree that they are of little consequence, and can be settled when the government bill is formulated.
4. We do not agree on the timing of the government bill. The Center Party wants it as soon as possible. The Liberal Party wants a remiss procedure and a postponement of the bill.

The second and last session of the working group added, following a suggestion made by the Liberals, that "the distribution of power between central and local authorities should be reviewed." At this stage of the negotiations the most important results were that the Center Party had secured the regional boards, and a general declaration that the higher education reform as decided upon in 1975 should be pursued. The Liberals believed that they had gained "free access" to significant parts of the reformed system. Only the timing of a government bill and the question whether a remiss procedure should precede it or not seemed at this point to require the arbitration of the party leaders.

However, this turned out to be difficult. In fact, the whole set of controversies were brought up again. For instance, neither the Liberal nor the Conservative leaders could accept the formulation in the first paragraph that the decision of 1975 "stands firm." Together with the areas of energy, housing, taxes and family policy, higher education remained to be settled towards the very end of the second week. Not that it could ever have jeopardized the government formation itself--but considering the relatively minor importance of the area in general terms, its role in the process is quite remarkable and should serve to indicate the severity of the policy differences which existed at the time.

In the official policy declaration of the new government its intentions concerning higher education were formulated in the following manner:

> The contents of education must be the chief concern of the reform of higher education. The resources devoted to research in universities and colleges must be increased. The proposals concerning the new organization of higher education are to undergo a remiss procedure. No total numerus clausus will be permitted. The regional boards are to be created. The distribution of power between central and local authorities is to be reviewed.

The negotiations concerning the distribution of ministerial posts between the parties had occurred relatively late in the process. The Liberals had

immediately claimed the Ministry of Education for one of their leading politicians--deputy chairman of the party, Jan-Erik Wikström--and that was not seriously contested by the other parties. The Center Party wanted to have their leading expert in higher education appointed as minister responsible for higher education and research. In a last-minute reshuffle she was removed however.

The Making of the Higher Education Bill

Two tasks required immediate action by the new government in the area of higher education. First, the political leadership in the Ministry was made complete. As the "spoils" had been defined in talks between the old and the new government (remember the novel character of the situation!) this implied that, apart from the ministers, only under-secretaries of state, press secretaries, and a limited number of special political advisers were to be replaced. In relation to higher education the under-secretary of state for education was of special importance--this post was soon occupied by a Liberal editorial writer. However, the new minister of education also wanted a political adviser specifically assigned to higher education--a newly elected Liberal member of parliament, Jörgen Ullenhag, who had also been teacher and administrator at Uppsala University was given this task. In all but name he soon functioned as a "junior minister" with responsibility for higher education reform.

Second, the details of the remiss procedure had to be settled. This Swedish method for formalized government consultation with interested parties is extremely elaborate and necessarily a bit cumbersome. In higher education it currently implies the collection of written statements from some 200 sources. Since these are often interest organizations and state agencies which are complex hierarchies or federations, they in their turn have to

collect opinions from their constituent units. In the specific case of the H75 materials sent out by the new government, they were given from mid-October until mid-December to produce their answers. This was, of course, a very short period under the circumstances. On the other hand--and this formed the basis of the Social Democratic and Center Party resistance to the whole idea--much of the material had already been sent out in a similar procedure. Besides, there was simply no more time available for consultation if the scheduled date of reform implementation (July 1, 1977) was to remain a possibility.

Of greater consequence for the contents of the government bill was the creation in late October of a special working group under the chairmanship of the new political adviser for higher education. It consisted largely of members of Parliament, i.e. the higher education experts from the three government parties, and its task was straightforward: to settle all the remaining political differences in view of the government bill which had to be submitted to the Riksdag in early 1977. The three-party negotiations which occurred in and between some ten formal meetings proved to be extremely tough. And by far the most difficult issue concerned the system of quantitative planning and the size of a "free sector," i.e. the number of educational programs and disciplines which would admit all those who were qualified and demanded a place. The differences between the parties stem, as we have seen earlier, from the Riksdag decision of 1975. The Center Party would not agree that the system proposed then implied a "total numerus clausus" for higher education while the other government parties insisted that it did, at least potentially, if and when resources would become scarce. With these differing conceptions as starting points, there is little wonder that formulations ostensibly agreed upon earlier would actually be interpreted differently now. Briefly put, the Center Party insisted that the formulations so far

agreed upon implied only technical modifications of the system of admission. The two other parties, on the other hand, demanded that a designated part of higher education would remain open; in principle it ought to correspond to the "free faculties" of the old system. Here places should be guaranteed in sufficient numbers to meet student demand. In sum, the formulations in the official policy declaration had constituted a perfect example of an agreement on words but not on substance.

The differences of principle but also of technical matters were still very important when towards the end of November the pressure of time forced a solution. In simplified summary, the Liberals and the Conservatives had their way: the agreement contained the idea of a free sector within an otherwise quantitatively planned system. If student demand heavily exceeded resources available, institutions could apply for additional funds during the current fiscal year. The size of the free sector was not specified at this stage.

The technical details of the agreement were ready by mid-December. At that point the remiss statements were, as we have seen, to have been sent in. An extremely intense effort to produce the bill now started within the ministry. Apart from the Liberal "junior minister," a representative of the Center Party also participated in every phase of importance. The Conservatives were more passive--as they had been in the working group composed of parliamentarians earlier. Apart from the ten or so ministry bureaucrats who took part in the actual writing of the bill, very few people were in fact involved. Except for the minister of education--who was not particularly active himself although he, of course, cleared the most controversial passages of the text--members of the cabinet seemed to have been consulted only once: towards the very end of the work (in January of 1977) when only budget levels were left to determine, the Center Party representative successfully urged the

prime minister to intervene. The result was more money earmarked for the new colleges in new locations, i.e. a pet project of the Center Party.

The bill was submitted to the Riksdag on schedule in early February of 1977.[11] Who was victorious? To what extent does the bill differ from Social Democratic policy?

It was immediately clear that the Liberals and the Conservatives had paid dearly for the pleasure of having a so-called free sector. Apart from that, very few, if any, significant changes could be identified in the bill when compared with the proposals from H75--which could in their turn largely be equated with Social Democratic policy as it would have been formulated during the Fall of 1976. These were the most noteworthy modifications: from the proposed Law of Higher Education many of the general goal formulations were removed, e.g. the statement that higher education should "further social change"; the proposed system for the election of rectors of institutions was changed somewhat; an educational program in the social sciences was added following an initiative by the Liberals; a promise was made that the government should review the distribution of power in view of further decentralization. In addition, the Social Democrats would probably have proposed more administrative positions in the new system.

All in all, the conclusion was obvious: the new non-socialist government largely continued the Social Democratic government's higher education policy as developed primarily within the frameworks of U68 and H75. The only significant departure was the free sector which had the potential to jeopardize important aspects of the reform. University opinion, in particular the liberal and conservative students, as well as a large share of the non-socialist press, reacted strongly when the contents of the government bill became known. Not only were there few or no changes of importance but the rhetoric of the bill was almost entirely in line with that used by the Social Democrats

earlier.

The Reform Bill in Parliament

There was never the slightest risk that the bill would not win the approval of a majority in the Riksdag--such are the rules of the parliamentary game in Sweden. The ordinary member of Parliament for the government parties had been almost entirely outside the policy-making process so far. During the Fall of 1976 all three party groups had been informed that negotiations were taking place--and that was largely it. When the bill was written all members were briefed and there was room for debate. In none of the three parties did this result in a majority demanding modifications. However, in both the Conservative and the Liberal groups a minority of members was so dissatisfied that they threatened to act in defiance of the majority. Faced with this embarrassing prospect, the parliamentary leadership of the two parties made an agreement that they could tolerate one, and only one, private member bill each which criticized important principles of the reform. The whips worked and apart from a highly critical bill from a Conservative professor of medicine and the two authorized ones just referred to, the private bills from members of the government parties concerned detailed matters.

What were the policy alternatives of the opposition parties as expressed in the Riksdag? The Communists repeated the heavy criticism which had accompanied their rejection of the reform decision in 1975, and proposed for the record that the entire issue of higher education reform be reconsidered by an ad hoc commission.

The criticism expressed in the main Social Democratic bill was relatively moderate--as could be expected. However, the specific proposal for a free sector and the technical arrangements which it had required came under heavy attack. In brief terms the proposal, in their view, would threaten all attempts

at rational planning, make the effort to recruit new groups more difficult, endanger the existence of new colleges in new locations, create insecurity for university and college staff, lead to centralization, and mean considerable red-tape in the admission procedure as well as in the procedures following upon an institution's application for additional funds. Lastly, the Social Democrats asked, rhetorically, what criteria had been used in selecting the programs and disciplines which made up the so-called free sector. Obviously, tradition had been most important, and this had resulted in a number of anomalies: Russian was included but not Chinese, etc.

Apart from the criticism of the modifications in the quantitative planning system, the party proposed among other things that money should be earmarked to give institutions 90 instead of 60 new administrators, that a commission should be appointed to investigate the implications of making all higher education institutions state institutions (approximately a third of the students were in institutions run by county councils and local authorities), that the election of rectors should proceed according to the H75 model, etc.

The political culture of the education committee of the Swedish parliament contains, according to knowledgeable observers, an unusually strong propensity to compromise. This feature and the fact that the government bill plus all the private member bills made up the most complex task of the committee so far in its history (according to committee officials), would perhaps point to modifications of the reform proposal at this stage. To some extent such expectations were borne out. Changes were made in committee but they were not too important. For instance, the number of places in the educational program for nursery school teachers was increased by 150, as earlier proposed by the Social Democrats. (The Liberals acted behind the scene in this matter, hoping to improve their record in the area of family policy.) Furthermore,

the committee explicitly demanded an ad hoc commission which would propose solutions to the problem of how to transform all institutions into state institutions. On three or four other minor points the education committee accepted proposals emanating from the Social Democrats.

The parliamentary debate on higher education reform took place on April 29. The list of speakers was impressive, but little or nothing new was said. Speeches made by members of the non-socialist parties revealed the decided lack of enthusiasm with which they viewed the proposals put forward by their government. In the principal roll-call the figures were 261 to 14--only the Communists had voted against the reform.

Reform Implementation

When the Riksdag voted upon the higher education reform, only about two months were left before the date of formal implementation (July 1, 1977). This was of course an extremely short period, and would have been entirely inadequate if detailed preparations had not started much earlier. In addition, all changes were not to occur overnight; rather, many would be implemented successively during the following year.

In this section an effort is made to assess the implementation of some principal goals of the reform when slightly more than a year has elapsed since it formally went into effect. Needless to say, any judgment is of a preliminary kind both since it is certainly too early for a definitive evaluation and because there is little systematic evidence of current trends. It should be noted, however, that an ambitious program of reform evaluation has been launched. As part of the 1975 decision the National Board of Universities and Colleges was given the task of evaluating the reform.[12]

Some of the materials from this so-called follow-up program are useful for the following assessment which focuses on institutional organization,

decentralization, deconcentration, quantitative planning, admission, and, finally, the efforts to improve links between education and research.[13]

Institutional organization. One fundamental assumption of the Swedish reformers was that higher education reform can be accomplished by manipulating the competence and composition of decision-making bodies in the system. The contents of teaching and research should not be regulated in the same detail as before, but an appropriate reflection of wider social values should be guaranteed, chiefly through the representation on governing boards of "public interests." As hinted at earlier, this issue had turned out to be the most bitterly contested of all of the original proposals from the U68 commission. A year's experience with public representatives on the boards of institutions points to less dramatic effects than either protagonists or adversaries predicted in the public debate. Conflicts over policy seem to have been rare--although they have occurred (e.g. at the University of Stockholm). In some instances, the public representatives are reported to be surprised at the lack of efficiency and the presence of favoritism in the deliberations of the boards. On their part, student representatives and others have accused public representatives of not grasping the issues during the first year. The prediction made by some scattered voices in the debate that the public representatives would actually turn into staunch defenders of "their" institutions rather than pose a threat to their autonomy, is probably to some extent being borne out. At the same time, it is of considerable interest to observe the efforts of policy coordination taking place, on a regional but also on a national basis, between members of boards representing, for instance, labor unions and political parties.[14]

The relations between members of the regional boards representing different interests are also reported to be satisfactory so far. The problem of this new level of decision-making has rather to do with purpose. As we saw

earlier, the creation of regional boards was the outcome of the attempts at majority building by the Social Democrats, aided by the general propensity of the Center Party to support regionally motivated measures. A year after their inception the role of the regional boards is still very uncertain. Obviously there is a great variation in role conception between the six boards--the one for the northern part of the country reportedly being the most active.[15] In general the environment of the boards is hostile and their existence has created tensions in the system, especially between the regional boards and the National Board of Universities and Colleges. Although a majority seems to be either negative or lukewarm at best about the prospects of the regional boards becoming a permanent feature of the Swedish system of higher education, a fairly safe prediction is that they will not be abolished: the nature of the political process which engendered them, plus the stature of the politicians on the boards, will probably guarantee their continued existence.

Another important aspect of the reform is the creation of a "unitary" system: all educational programs offered in one location should be in a single institution. In several cases this implied mergers of institutions, although some exceptions were made to the general principle. Some mergers were obviously carried through in defiance of a majority of teachers and students of the institutions concerned. Cases in point are the College of Journalism in Stockholm, now forming part of the University of that city, and the Teachers College in Malmö, becoming a department within Lund University. The former is still struggling for independence. The latter was not equally negative to start with, but has turned increasingly so. The main argument of the Teachers College in favor of its forming a separate institution again is that the integration with the University has started a process of "academic drift" within the College. Another illustration of the imperfect implementation

of the basic principle is provided by the eight schools for creative arts in Stockholm. Although they were not merged as of July 1, 1977, they were expected by everybody concerned to be so in the near future. In the face of stern opposition from at least three schools, and skepticism on the part of a majority of the rest, the National Board of Universities and Colleges suddenly, and to everyone's surprise, changed its mind in November of 1977.

On the other hand, it seems as if eventually all higher education will come under the purview of the state: as mentioned above, an ad hoc commission was recently appointed to work out a proposal to that effect.

Decentralization. An important theme of the reform is the decentralization of decision-making power from the central to regional and local levels in higher education. The increased autonomy concerns important areas such as financial matters, curricula, internal structure of institutions, etc.[15] There should be no doubt about the success of these efforts. Even if confusion still reigns in most quarters as to the exact division of labor in the new system, even many who were skeptics of the genuine will, and ability, of the central government to decentralize are surprised at the extent of actual decentralization. Perhaps a bit unexpectedly, institutions have often not used their newly acquired powers in full: the old habit of pushing the solution of conflicts, and difficult decisions in general, up the ladder dies hard. Problems have been especially acute in relation to the new budgetary system which is a chief element in the pursued policy of decentralization. It may be said to represent a mild version of program budgeting, and aims at allocating funds for broad "output" functions instead of spending categories such as salaries, literature, etc. The transformation of the old categories into the smaller number of items of the new system has proved to be very difficult, and has caused a lot of confusion. To this has been added the uncertainty caused by the free sector. These arrangements imply that a

budgetary process involving all levels of the system occurs during a running fiscal year. What happened in the first year amply illustrates that it is not a simple application of technical formulae but, rather, a typical bargaining process. The following amounts were considered appropriate by the various levels to compensate for free-sector enrollment (mill. Sw. Crs.):

Institutions	26.5
Regional Boards	21
National Board of Universities and Colleges	18
Cabinet	12
Parliament	12

There should be little doubt, however, about the crucial importance of the new budget system for the decentralization effort as a whole, even if it could be considerably perfected as a budgetary mechanism.[17]

Deconcentration. When a number of university "affiliates" were created in the 1960s in Sweden they were largely aimed at relieving some pressure on the old universities. When U68 proposed to spread higher education resources more evenly throughout the country the motive force was largely different: now geographical dispersion of higher education would contribute to regional justice and development. Their proposals in this regard were heavily contested then, in 1973, when student numbers in the universities had actually declined compared to the late 1960s. But the policy coalition between the Social Democrats and the Center Party accepted the importance of this reform goal, and formulated the principle that all future expansion of numbers should occur in newly formed institutions; the old universities should at most keep their size. However, the reform decision in 1977 did not imply any radical dispersion of facilities at all; in fact, not a single location without permanent higher education resources was given any within the framework of the reform, although the smaller institutions were given a disproportionate share of "growth money." This special destination of resources to new and small institutions could be expected to continue--but it is extremely

doubtful whether the end result will be a redirection of resources. It may even be the case that the larger institutions will turn out to have grown equally fast or even faster when compensations have been made for the free sector enrollment. To quote from a recent statement by the National Board of Universities and Colleges:[18]

> One effect [of the free sector] which was easy to predict has been confirmed: the increase in enrollments occurs at the larger institutions . . . The free sector implies a risk of further concentration of students at the already dominant locations which have a large number of potential students. Consequently, an important premise of the 1975 reform decision is not present.

Furthermore, if the present interest in problems of research and researcher training turns out to represent a genuine change of priorities, this might also imply a threat to a policy which favours smaller institutions and the dispersion of higher education to new locations (see below for an analysis of that development).

Quantitative planning. The improvement of the instruments of quantitative planning had been one of the main tasks of the U68 commission. Its proposals in this regard evolved from the assumption that there were three factors which should determine the size of the system: the demand for places, the need for manpower, and the resources available. The final weighting of these factors represented essentially a political choice which only to a limited extent could be based on technical arguments. The original U68 idea was that the total number of students should be determined in advance through yearly decisions by the Riksdag. The compromise between the Social Democrats and the Center Party in 1975 implied in simplified summary that the determination of exact student numbers was decentralized to regional and local bodies while the role of Parliament in quantitative planning would be to decide upon the distribution of financial resources--and thereby in gross terms upon student numbers. The 1975 decision also meant a stronger

emphasis on individual demand for places as a determining factor; in a forseeable future nobody who was qualified according to the new rules of admission and wanted a place would have lacked one. As we have shown in some detail already, the 1977 revision implied that a free sector was introduced (or partially inherited from the old system, if you like). Now qualified applicants were guaranteed a place in certain study programs and disciplines.

When the enrollment figures for the Fall of 1977 were compiled it was found that the free sector had expanded in a disproportionate manner: the increase was more than 20 percent compared with the Fall term of one year earlier. At the same time a fairly large number of places (some 2000) remained unfilled in the rest of higher education--notably in natural sciences and technology. In the Spring term of 1978 the demand for places continued to increase although not at the same rate as in the first post-reform class.[19] The opponents of the free sector saw in these developments, and in particular in the administrative chaos which often characterized the institutions during the initial period, a confirmation of their predictions and fears. The supporters of a free sector countered by asking what would have been the effects of the 1975 model: would any applicant have been denied a place?

Forecasts of student numbers in higher education have never been particularly accurate in Sweden (or elsewhere). However, the size of the increase in the Fall term of 1977 was extraordinary. To some extent this may have been a result of the new system of admission which broadened considerably the number of eligible individuals. The current situation in the Swedish labor market may also have been of importance: the minister of education himself argued that the free sector had worked so as to reduce unemployment among college-age youth to a significant extent. It seems evident, however, that a third factor had been at work: the propaganda surrounding the higher

education reform had been considerable. The National Board of Universities and Colleges had poured millions of Kronor into a media campaign the tone of which was that higher education was now open to everybody--and that it would be a fairly easy undertaking for those who tried.[20]

Admission. The new rules of admission are seen as crucial to the important reform goal aiming at a broader recruitment to higher education. Generally less weight than before is accorded formal academic merits of applicants while more importance is given work experience. Briefly, the applicants are divided into four quota groups according to types of qualifications. Within each group they compete only with each other for a number of places which is proportionate to the number of the group in relation to the total number of applicants. The selection within groups is variably based on school marks, work experience or an aptitude test.[21] How did this system work during its first year of application? From an administrative viewpoint it proved to be extremely cumbersome. Although the texts of application were very detailed, many problems had obviously not been anticipated and had to be handled ad hoc in the first intake procedure. Delays were considerable, and together with the practice of applicants to sign up for an unexpectedly large number of programs and courses, this made the system almost useless for short-term planning purposes. Fierce criticism was levelled at the authorities; to nobody's surprise the traditional opponents of reform launched this critique--but they were joined by others, including MPs from the government parties who on several occasions put oral questions to the minister of education concerning existing plans to remedy the situation. In his replies the minister generally argued that the level of ambition decided upon as regards a broader recruitment to higher education made technical complexity a necessary evil. However, many aspects of the procedure could and would be perfected with the passage of time. There were some limited

possibilities of improvement in the short run as well and he soon ordered a special task force within the National Board of Universities and Colleges to come up with proposals. When they did (in January of 1978), the only essential change suggested was to limit the applicants' choice of alternative programs and courses: hereafter they would not be allowed to sign up for more than 30 "points" per term (20 is considered to be the ideal work load).

Apart from the administrative success or failure of the new system--which was of course important from the point of view of the legitimacy of the new political leadership in higher education--what impact did it have on the reform goal of broader recruitment? The opponents and skeptics of the new system soon found a mouthpiece by way of unexpected consequences: in a number of elite programs, such as medical education, the average age of those admitted increased significantly. At the same time as an applicant in his early fifties was allowed to start his roughly seven years of education to become a physician, all twenty-year old applicants with the average mark 5 (on a scale running from 1 to 5) from upper-secondary school were not admitted.

In March of 1978 the National Board of Universities and Colleges published the first in a series of reports on the new system of admission. In brief terms the main conclusions of the report can be summarized as follows:[22]

> --the new rules had certainly worked so as to put a higher value on work experience;
>
> --the average age of students had increased slightly in general, and significantly so in a number of the most attractive programs;
>
> --the goal of recurrent education had probably been furthered;
>
> --the proportion of female students had decreased in some attractive programs; to a large extent this was probably due to the fact that applicants got extra points from active participation in voluntary associations--a kind of experience which women turned out to have to a much lesser degree than men;

--it seemed doubtful at best whether the reform had contributed to a broader social recruitment;

--a more significant change had been a redistribution of chances to gain admission to the most attractive programs within the group of applicants who were already qualified according to the old rules; the older ones with work experience were now able to compete in spite of fairly low marks.

The alleged effect of voluntary association merits became perhaps the most hotly debated issue in the press and elsewhere, and demands were immediately raised from several quarters to have this rule abolished. This will probably happen in the near future in spite of opposition from the Social Democrats and, in particular, from the labor unions. In fact, the National Board of Universities and Colleges very recently proposed that the rule should be removed from the books by 1979.

If the analysis presented by the Board remains valid for future classes, then the reform will have largely failed to reach one of its most significant goals, namely to broaden the social recruitment to higher education. These early data must, however, be interpreted with extreme care; maybe those commentators will prove right who argue that the first few terms will imply the skimming off of a layer of enthusiasts which exists in all systems of higher education and who tend to grasp every new opportunity. In the end the new system will, according to this view, work to the advantage of the underprivileged instead of the enthusiastic.

Links between education and research. From a very low-key treatment in the U68 report of 1973 the issue of a connection between all basic education and research in higher education was forwarded as one of the central aspects of the 1975 and 1977 reform decisions. This occurred largely in response to fierce criticism from university people following the U68 report. The principle was clear-cut: all basic education should be linked to research.

To what extent has this principle been implemented so far? Already in

the government bill of 1977 special funds were earmarked for the purpose. The grants were allocated to the new regional boards to be "used in an innovative way." The reports filed by the boards with the ministry covering activities during the first year reveal that most monies have so far either been spent on the planning of future projects or on support of individual academics, e.g. for methodological training.[23]

In addition to the regionally administered grants, professorships have been created in social work as a first step toward building a research organization in that field. And, a small effort has been made to initiate mass communications research in direct connection with the education of journalists.

All in all, fairly little has been done so far--and could possibly have been done within such a short time span--concerning this reform goal. Relatively important measures are, however, being contemplated. A recent government commission has dealt with aspects of the problem; inter alia it proposed a minor reduction of the teaching load of university lecturers, special further-training opportunities for non-univeristy teachers, and a reform of admission criteria to researcher training aimed at widening the opportunities for students from some traditionally disadvantaged programs.[24] And, if we are to believe recent policy statements, a number of areas will have their research organization strengthened, notably those of social work, health care and the fine arts.[25]

Other Policy Developments

Although it has certainly been dominant, the reform package implemented from July 1, 1977, in no way represents all measures taken and problems confronted by the new government in the area of higher education. In this

section we first take a closer look at the new leaders' use of two important policy instruments at their disposal: ad hoc commissions and appointments. After that we investigate briefly the government's behavior along the policy dimensions of student aid and research, both of which emerged as salient issues for the new government.

Ad hoc commissions. Working parties and commissions of ad hoc character tied to the respective ministries form an exceptionally important part of public policy-making processes in Sweden. Whether their primary function is to hammer out political compromises, to solve complicated technical problems or, as often is the case, to bury controversial issues, they make up a crucial instrument for a government whose intentions are to redirect policy.[26]

How was this instrument used in the policy area of higher education? A study calculated that the new coalition government created some 70 new ministerial ad hoc commissions during the first nine months of its reign.[27] Of those the Ministry of Education had (as earlier) more than its share: 13. In the area of higher education two full-scale commissions were appointed. One of them would be concerned with the position of teachers in the new system of higher education, the other with health care education programs; both had been anticipated in the reform bill. As mentioned earlier, a third commission was appointed very recently to investigate how best to integrate institutions now under the purview of county councils and local authorities into a unified state system. Two further areas needing investigation were outlined in the bill. One of them had even been part of the process of government formation as we saw earlier, namely the issue of the distribution of power between central, regional and local authorities in higher education. The task was now given to the "junior minister" and not to a full-scale commission.[28] A second task which was treated in this way concerned a problem area which has haunted policy-makers in higher education for years: the issue of obligatory

union membership for all students.[29]

Apart from the creation of new commissions, the new government has used its powers to modify existing ones. The earlier cited study shows that in the initial nine-month period one-fifth of the commissions existing at the time of the shift of government were modified in various ways. Changing the chairman was the most commonly utilized technique. In the area of higher education only two commissions were affected, and then only through a modification of their terms of reference. In one of these cases the measure was motivated by partisan interests, in the other it was not--but such motives to some extent permeated the actual wording of the new terms.[30]

Apart from the cases already referred to , there is one commission that may be said to fall in between: the commission on post-graduate education published its main report in November of 1977 but wanted to continue its work in some specific areas. Due mostly to Conservative resistance, however, it was formally terminated--but in reality it survived, although with a new chairman (Liberal MP) and under a new name.[31]

In brief summary we may conclude that the instrument of ad hoc commissions has not been used very actively by the new political leadership to create new policies, or change existing ones, in the area of higher education.

Appointments. The Swedish version of a "spoils system" is extremely limited in scope--although nobody knew (or could possibly know) its exact boundaries at the time of the 1976 general election. Soon after the election an agreement between the political parties was reached on this matter: it implied, as mentioned earlier, that apart from cabinet ministers only under-secretaries of state, press secretaries and a handful of specially designated political advisers would be considered political appointees and consequently have to resign. Considering the prevalence of more or less outspoken Social Democrats in the small, crucial policy-planning bodies that are Swedish

ministries, the defined scope must certainly have been regarded as an absolute minimum by many representatives of the new government parties. The new government was obviously restrained by a lack of qualified people and also by their long-standing criticism of the Social Democrats for having packed the ministries with party members--a behavior which was, then, considered improper.

In the area of higher education the principles seem to have been adhered to: no ministerial official apart from those categories mentioned above resigned following the election.[32] And no official seems to have been recruited mainly on party grounds during the subsequent two years apart from the under-secretary of state, the press secretary and two political advisers--one being the already mentioned "junior minister" of higher education appointed immediately after the coming-to-power of the new government. The other was appointed in mid-1977 to perform a parallel function for research policy; he was also an MP of the Liberal Party.

As for appointments of members in new ad hoc commissions the new government has acted as could be expected: where straightforward political representation has occurred the non-socialist representatives have made up the majority. As for already existing commissions, the government did not in the area of higher education modify their membership as it did in many other areas, including other parts of education.

A large number of non-ministerial appointments have been made during the last two years. By way of summary it may be said that where political culture has prescribed party affiliation of appointees the government has not hesitated to follow that pattern. However, it has also in some instances been "generous" vis-à-vis the Social Democrats in a way which has created disagreements among the coalition parties.[33]

Our conclusion is that the instrument of appointments in the area of

higher education has not been extensively used to further new policies or redirect old ones.

Student aid. The reason we take a somewhat closer look at this policy dimension is, first, that the Liberals had made a change in the rules governing student aid an election promise. Specifically, they had pledged to do away with red tape and also abolish what was referred to as the "spouse testing" rule. The latter implied that a husband or wife had the level of his or her combined loan/grant reduced in proportion to the spouse's income. Second, as we have seen, the improvement of student aid was also part of the new government's official policy declaration. Already by the end of October 1976 the new minister of education acted on the problem: he had an already existing ad hoc commission specify the financial consequences of an abolishment of the "spouse testing" rule. And only a week later the government decided to allocate more resources so as to guarantee a more swift handling of student aid applications.

However, in spite of these and subsequent efforts by the new political leadership to stick to election promises and thus regain some of the support lost among students, "spouse testing" remains a feature of the system of student aid; according to a very recent statement (complementary terms of reference for the already existing ad hoc commission in this field, given in October of 1978) no improvement can be expected in the next few years, due to the austerity measures taken to curb government spending.

Research and researcher training. The functions of the higher education system with regard to research and the training of researchers had been deliberately excluded from the terms of reference of U68--a fact which was severly criticized, in particular at the time of publication of its main report in 1973. This criticism and also a more general realization of the need for a national research policy had furthered the creation of two important

commissions (as well as a few minor ones) in the first half of the 1970s, one focusing on nation-wide arrangements in the field of research, the other on the role of higher education institutions in research--specifically postgraduate training.

Now, both commissions reported to the government in the Fall of 1977. Combined, their proposals were important although both must be characterized as far from radical in their implications. We will not enter into the detailed proposals;[34] rather, we shall dwell somewhat on indicators which show the significantly rising interest in research policy in Sweden.

It seems certain that the press has never over an extended period carried so many articles on the topic of research policy as during the last year. And the character of participants in this debate indicates a widening of interest to non-academic circles: politicians and trade union people have, for instance, contributed extensively.

The increased importance of research policy has even been reflected in the internal structure of Sweden's two largest trade unions: both the TCO (white-collar employees) and the LO (blue-collar) have set up committees with full-time secretaries to deal with these issues. To LO this represents the first comprehensive effort ever to formulate a research policy.

Furthermore, this increased attention to issues in research policy is obviously reflected in the bureaucracies of all levels. At the central level the National Board of Universities has recently (in June of 1978) produced its policy statement in the area--including the wish on the part of the Board itself to play a significantly more active role in the future.[35] As pointed out earlier, a special political advisor was appointed within the Ministry of Education to deal with research policy. And within the Ministry's unit for higher education, research policy was reportedly dominating entirely by mid-1978. The resulting government bill is due in the Spring of 1979.

All in all, we have noted a remarkable increase in the attention paid to research policy since late 1977. Characteristically a wider set of interests is involved than ever before. Some causes and implications of these developments are explored further in the concluding section of this paper.

Conclusions

When the government bill containing proposals for higher education reform was published there was no doubt in the mind of the interested public that it represented continuity and few, if any, policy departures. The one important gain for the reform opponents was the free sector. But even that was heavily criticised for being too narrow, and the common judgment was that the Liberal and Conservative parties had lost to a winning Center Party conspiring with the Social Democrats.

In simplified terms our problem can thus be stated: why did both the Liberals and the Conservatives give up their positions to rally behind a reform, many basic principles of which they had earlier strongly opposed?

The Conservatives represent the simpler case of the two. Throughout the process it was evident that a large share of the party only accepted the reform out of perceived necessity--a stance which was aided by the fact that the party was not made formally responsible for higher education within the coalition government. However, it should also be noted that a number of party leaders were not as negative towards U68 as the mainstream of the party notables. In particular the under-secretary of state for schools--the main Conservative actor during much of the process--and the party secretary were both high-ranking officials of the Swedish federation for professionals and people with academic degrees, Saco/SR. Although that organization had in many respects been hostile to the U68 proposals, it long supported efforts aiming at more strict quantitative planning, i.e. a numerus clausus for the

entire system if you like. This may go a long way toward explaining the relative passivity displayed by the Conservatives in the internal negotiations.

When we turn to the Liberal Party the situation is largely different. The party was given formal responsibility for higher education in the new government, and it also decided to tie one of its MPs to this troublesome sector as a special adviser. And since coming to power that political leadership not only passively accepted the major themes of higher education reform but, rather, supported it actively and with considerable eloquence in all its complexity. Why and how did this come about?

We think three sets of factors should be introduced to provide a satisfactory answer. First, a simple but relevant partial explanation is that there was a majority in the Riksdag for higher education reform in line with the 1975 framework decision and the subsequent H75 proposals. The unique historical event of a non-socialist three-party coalition forming a government did not alter this fundamental fact. And the Center Party used every opportunity through the bargaining process to remind the other two about this aspect of political reality. At the same time: none of the other two parties believed for a moment that the Center Party would risk its government position for higher education reform. Still, a Center Party establishing a limited conspiracy with the opposition was probably a sufficiently bleak prospect for the other two to have some impact on their actions.

A second factor to take into account is the allegedly irrestible force of the reform process itself. It was an argument used by reform proponents both internally and in public. To what extent was it valid? A memo written in October of 1976 by officials of the Ministry gives us an idea of the kind of arguments that confronted the new political leadership. In its opening paragraph the document states: "The work with the higher education reform has now proceeded so far that the implementation should be undertaken."

And it goes on saying that the original time schedule ought to be adhered to as well. Then the politicians are reminded of some facts. An already existing provisional regulation concerning admission: many prospective students have already made plans according to it; the thorough reorganization of the central agency: its new structure presupposes the implementation of major principles of the reform; lastly, the regional boards have in fact already hired most of their personnel. Furthermore, unless the reform is implemented as planned, many people will mistrust the genuine will of politicians to keep promises. Finally, an additional argument concludes that many in higher education, including a majority of the rectors, wanted the reform to be implemented according to the original time schedule, otherwise "both troubles and confusion" would result.

There should be no doubt whatsoever about the real influence of the on-going reform process on the actions of the new political leadership. The style of the cited memo itself also reminds us that two different factors were actually operating here: first, there were the forces set in motion by decisions already taken and preparations already made; second, there were the bureaucrats who for years had been involved in planning the reform. It was very well known at the time that the civil servants in the Ministry of Education and in the upper echelons of the National Board of Universities and Colleges were overwhelmingly proponents of reform and active adherents to Social Democratic ideas in the field of higher education. The Ministry of Education was often mentioned as the most "politicized" of all Swedish ministries. Needless to say, we do not argue here that a conspiracy of Social Democratic bureaucrats forced its will upon powerless Liberal politicians. Had the latter been sufficiently strong-minded in their effort to affect the on-going policy deliberations, they would certainly have had the means to do it. Instead they were largely persuaded by the (somewhat slanted) advice

which was given them. And in its turn this, as we shall see, was partly due to the fact that the new Liberal leadership differed from the old.

Thus a third factor will be added, this time an internal process within the Liberal Party. In simplified terms, it may be argued that the party's position in the area of higher education was "atypical" before the election of 1976. The pattern established in the broader field of education policy has traditionally been a grand coalition among all parties except, from time to time, the Conservative Party or parts thereof. Before U68 this was valid for higher education as well.

In Parliament this well-established pattern was broken in 1975 as shown above. The background was the general political polarization within academia. Both the Social Democrats and the Center Party lost a considerable share of their support among teachers, researchers and students. Even the Liberals had problems among students. There remained, however, a fundamental ideological and socioeconomic similarity between the party and academia. The presence of academic people has always been considerable in the Liberal Party.[36]

We are not arguing that there was some kind of "automatic" process involved, only that a similarity in outlook aided the party's strategic choice to support and woo the activist parts of academia. An equally important condition for this choice was that the area of higher education was after all not very important in Swedish party politics. At the time of U68 the Liberal Party had in fact entered into a period of close collaboration with the Social Democratic government with regard to the major socioeconomic issues. Higher education, however, represented a secondary issue area, and here confrontation could be chosen without affecting too much the general climate.

The change of governments in October of 1976 drastically changed the process of policy formulation on higher education issues within the Liberal

Party. Its general political significance increased considerably, and the leadership changed. What did the new party spokesmen represent? The minister of education, Jan-Erik Wikström, was a typical representative of the broad compromises in educational policy. His interest in higher education was, as already hinted at, fairly limited. Still, he was certainly an influential politician capable of outlining the strategy in higher education which would best serve the party's interests. The "junior minister" of higher education, Jörgen Ullenhag, was a university lecturer from Uppsala University--but he had also served as an administrator there. Whatever influenced his views on higher education policy, there was no doubt that they had differed considerably from those expressed by the then party spokesman in 1975 and which were also accepted as official party policy. Ullenhag had wanted the party to join the Social Democrats and the Center Party in the parliamentary framework decision of that year.[37]

The third important Liberal actor was the under-secretary of state, Bert Levin. His views can be traced in detail before mid-1973 since he wrote editorials on the subject until that date. In contrast to the others, he seems to have been a representative voice of the anti-U68 faction. In sum, at least two out of the three Liberals forming the new top leadership in higher education were considerably less negative to U68 and the subsequent reform proposals than was expressed by the official pre-election policy of the Liberal Party. Our conclusion, then, is that the change in leadership was indeed crucial to the smooth transformation of that policy. In essence, the transformation implied that a reform, which earlier was seen as mainly creating new problems without solving the most pressing existing ones, now (with some modifications) was regarded as the ideal framework for the future development of Swedish higher education.

The new leadership also struck a very optimistic note concerning the implementation of the higher education reform. According to the minister of education, speaking before the Riksdag in May of 1978:[38]

> The new högskolan has essentially functioned as intended during its first year. Among the positive factors I will particularly stress that the new decision-making bodies, from regional boards to program committees, have immediately found their identity and have worked well. The external representatives have quickly become useful to higher education.

Decentralization had proven to be a success as well--which the minister considered to be of special importance in the current period of austerity in higher education. The first year's experience had, however, also "shown that there may be good reasons to consider modifications." But only one such possible modification was mentioned in the speech: the "voluntary association merit" rule of the new system of admission discussed earlier.

This general message has since been repeated by the minister on several occasions and also by the "junior minister" of higher education, Jörgen Ullenhag. The latter has also contributed the observation that the reform has turned out so well as to silence some of the earlier criticism in important respects.[39]

The optimistic tone of the politicians is, of course, to a large extent professionally motivated. Our own brief assessment above ended on a more pessimistic note with regard to important goals of the reform. This prediction of partial failure is only, and could only be at this point, to a limited extent based on reliable information concerning specific trends. Of equal importance are three other, more general observations.

First, signs are beginning to show that this reform effort, as other complex social reforms, will have its share of unintended consequences or epiphenomena. One example was noted earlier: a rule largely intended to favor trade union people was found to discriminate against women. Problems

of this magnitude could probably be dealt with successfully as they emerge--although the time and energy they steal from more important deliberations should not be underestimated: a considerable part of the new minister's public activity has concerned such immediate problems.

Furthermore, the enthusiasm of the prevalent reform zealots seems to have waned considerably during the first year of implementation. To some extent this could only be expected: implementation will seldom mobilize to the same extent as policy planning. However, the lowering morale seems more dramatic than may be considered "normal.". Perhaps this development, although subtle and difficult to assess, is actually an important impact of the change of government. Essentially, we have here a case of political opportunism: those at the central level who have been lukewarm at best about the reform now perceive themselves, rightly or wrongly, as having better political support from above. In other words, the morale of that minority has been correspondingly strengthened.

In the long run, however, a third and more important kind of obstacle to successful implementation may be found in the reform strategy itself. In summary fashion our argument is that the two major reform elements of decentralization and participation have created ample opportunities for conservative forces (i.e. conservative with regard to this reform) to obstruct reform implementation at the institutional level.[40] Now, this may have been a minor problem if it were not for the fact that the "conservatives" in this sense probably make up a majority among teachers and students active in decision-making at the institutional level, at least in the universities. This may not necessarily manifest itself as outright obstruction, only as indifference and a consequent lack of initiatives. In addition, it may be argued--in an analogy with our hypothetical reasoning concerning the central level--that the morale of reform proponents has been lowered, and that of

opponents correspondingly strengthened, at the local level as well. However, all major goals of the reform may not be endangered; in many instances the actions of the central level will still determine the outcome. But this genuine dilemma stemming from the reform design--more decentralization creates greater risks for unsuccessful implementation of other major goals--is only now being understood to its fullest implications. We predict that important policy differences will eventually develop along this dimension. Some will argue that the solution of the problem lies in the resurrection of a more centralized approach; others will probably conclude that the days of national reforms are over since in their eyes such a strategy has proved ineffective, largely due to the nature of academic organization.

Our analysis of the measures taken by the coalition government within the framework of higher education policy but outside that of the specific reform bill in no way justifies a modification of the general conclusion. Neither through ad hoc commissions nor through appointments has the new leadership proved any intentions to depart significantly from established policy. In the area of student aid, the willingness has been present but the financial means conspicuously lacking.

However, we also noted a considerable reorientation of public debate and organizational activity during 1977: research and the training of researchers came into focus as never before.[41] Why did this happen?

A number of circumstances contributed in our view to the growing interest in research policy. There was the internal logic of the policy-making process. Two important commissions reported,as we have seen, in the Fall of 1977. This was in itself sufficient to stir up considerable activity. Hundreds of people were automatically drawn into the intense search for inconsistencies and other negative features in the two reports within the

framework of a remiss procedure. This factor goes a long way toward explaining the exact timing of the arrival of research policy on the public agenda, and also a minimum level of interest. But other circumstances contributed to the unprecedented extent of interest. First, several "objective" problems were of sufficient magnitude to engender demands for remedial action: in particular, the number of research students had fallen drastically in the mid-1970s, notably in the natural sciences and technology. Public debate with regard to this problem and others were beginning to be heard already before the publication of the commission reports.[42]

Further, the economic crisis in Sweden (albeit limited in international comparison) which became particularly acute during 1977 started an extensive public search for explanations and remedies. A surprisingly strong consensus soon emerged: Sweden had lost its competitive strength because it had neglected the crucial investments in R & D activities which could further economic growth. The remedy was obvious: more money should be poured into research, in particular that of science and technology.

Another factor to take into account in explaining the growth of research policy as an issue could be characterized as the "policy vacuum" left by the passing of higher education reform into its implementation phase. The policy-makers and attentive publics are sufficiently overlapping in the two cases as to largely prohibit two issues of such magnitude to thrive at the same time. The spreading pessimism with respect to reform implementation observed earlier has only added strength to this mechanism.

The internal logic of policy-making, the "objective" problems of research, the character of the public interpretation of the economic crisis, and the policy vacuum left by the passing of higher education reform were, then, in our view important in determining the timing and extent of interest in research policy. Now, to return to the major theme of this paper: could

the change of governments further explain the rise of research policies as an issue?

First, did important policy differences exist between the political parties before 1976? In simplified summary: they were small but they existed. Perhaps a bit unexpectedly, the non-socialist opposition parties had generally been more "activist" in their approach throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. They wanted the central government to develop a more comprehensive national research policy. As a first step they had proposed an ad hoc commission in the area. Generally they also wanted more generous grants to research--but the differences may well be considered marginal.[43]

As we have hinted at earlier the new non-socialist government stated in its official policy declaration that the research function of higher education should be given priority. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt the sincerity of intentions here. However, in its two budgets the new government only to a very limited extent proved its intentions. The situation may be characterized as one of overall austerity where research has suffered relatively little in comparison with many other areas of public spending. Furthermore, to the extent that choices had to be made between undergraduate education and research and researcher training, it seems that the latter was treated slightly more generously.[44]

What has been the Social Democratic reply to allegations of having neglected research and researcher training in higher education? To some extent they have admitted their guilt, but they have hastened to add that the other parties were only slightly, if at all, better in this regard. Now it is time for everybody to make up for negligent behavior. Their recent proposals in the Riksdag would have added fairly substantial sums to those suggested by the government.[45] In a more elaborate reply to the allegations, the Social Democrats have referred to their "grand design" in the policy area

of education: the early 1960s saw the reform of primary and lower-secondary education into the comprehensive grundskolan; in the late 1960s and early 1970s the time was ripe for the tranformation of upper-secondary education into the comprehensive gymnasieskolan; by the mid-1970s it was time for higher education, in the form of the new högskolan; as a logical sequence, researcher training and research have now come into focus.[46] This interpretation fits of course neatly with our related ideas of an "internal logic of policy-making" and a "policy vacuum." This said, it is our contention that the Social Democrats are also to some extent reorienting policy. The priority given to research-related issues will probably have ramifications for other policy dimensions. Although our observations are scattered so far, they are beginning to constitute a trend: both policy contents and policy leadership seem to be adjusted to the needs of research.[47]

To sum up, we argue that the growth in the importance of research and researcher training in national policy-making can only marginally be attributed to the change of government. However, bearing this general conclusion in mind, it is also of considerable interest to note that the reorientation toward research seems to have engendered both an alteration of policy contents and of policy-makers within the Social Democratic Party. With a caveat for the premature character of this observation, it should serve to indicate that, whatever has caused it, the rise of research as a central political issue has implied a more fundamental readjustment for the Social Democrats than for the non-socialist parties.

* * *

If we were asked to summarize the major finding of this paper in a few words, we would suggest the following formulation: While the new

Swedish government did not significantly succeed in changing established higher education policy, that policy changed significantly. The resolution of that paradox should, inter alia, teach us that the analysis of public policy changes in higher education is almost as complex as policy itself.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Olof Petersson, Väljarna och valet 1976 (Stockholm: 1977); and Sören Holmberg & Jörgen Westerståhl, Väljarna och kärnkraften (Stockholm: 1977).

[2] In October of 1978, the three-party government was replaced by a Liberal one-party government. Ironically, the coalition fell over that same issue--nuclear power--which had brought it to power exactly two years earlier.

[3] A significant part of this research has been reported earlier in Rune Premfors, Regeringsskiftet och högskolepolitiken (University of Stockholm: Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy, Report No. 2, October 1977). However, as can be seen from the publication date, that report only covered the first year of the new government.

Although the usual printed material has been used extensively for the study, the most important sources are a large number of interviews with central policy-makers in Swedish higher education--partly undertaken while policy was still evolving. I mention none of them here but thank them all for sharing their experiences with me in a stunningly open fashion. In addition, I have been able to draw on several internal memos; these are detailed in the above mentioned report. That report should also generally be consulted for more detailed footnotes concerning developments during the first year.

[4] See Olof Ruin, Studentmakt och statsmakt (forthcoming, 1979), in particular the chapter "En intresseorganisation i svårigheter: Sveriger förenade studentkårer (SFS)."

[5] Among OECD nations, Sweden experienced on average the fastest growth in the period 1950-1965; see Rune Premfors & Bertil Östergren, Systems of Higher Education: Sweden (New York: International Council for Educational Development, 1978), esp. pp. 5-14.

[6] For an overview of national higher education policy during the 1960s, see Bo Lindensjö, Problem och handlingslinjer i 1960-talets svenska universitets--och högskolepolitik (University of Stockholm: Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy, Report no. 3, December 1977).

[7] Olof Ruin, Studentmakt och statsmakt, op. cit., the chapter entitled, "En förvaltning i omdaning: Den nya högskolan"; see also his External Control and Internal Participation: Trends in the Politics and Policies of Swedish Higher Education (University of Stockholm: Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy, Report no. 1, June 1977).

[8] The internal work of U68 has recently been studied through an extensive set of interviews with practically all important actors performed by my colleague Bo Lindensjö and (though to a smaller extent) myself. The research will soon be reported in detail by Bo Lindensjö in a publication from the Group for the Study of Higher Education and Research Policy at the University of Stockholm.

[9] The main report is SOU 1973: 2 Högskolan. An English summary has been published with the title, Higher Education: Proposals by the 1968 Educational Commission (Stockholm: 1973). For an abridged version of that summary, see Minerva, Vol. XII, No. 1 (January 1974), pp. 83-114.

[10] At the time the constitutionality of this arrangement was seriously questioned: the issue was whether MPs were allowed to be directly involved in the writing of government bills. The working party reported in Högskole-reform: Promemoria avgiven av U68-beredningen (Ministry of Education: DsU 1974: 6).

[11] But only barely so: half of the bill was delivered in mimeographed form, a shape almost unheard of in the history of Swedish cabinet-parliament relations. An English summary is now available: The Reform of Higher Education: Government Bill 1976/77: 59 (Ministry of Education: 1978).

[12] See "The UHÄ Programme for the Follow-Up of the Reform of Higher Education--Current Status," R & D for Higher Education, 1978: 3 (National Board of Universities and Colleges: 1978). The arrangement has been criticized (e.g., in the private member bills by Conservative MPs), and shortly before the downfall of the government a special group under the chairmanship of the undersecretary of state, and consisting of two representatives of each of the three coalition parties, was appointed to watch the evaluation effort by the Board.

[13] A basic problem in any evaluation effort is not even mentioned here, namely the difficulty in determining the reform goals in a precise fashion . . . The important reform goal of recurrent education is of such complex and long term character that we have decided not to bring it into our modest assessment of reform implementation. For recent discussions of some of the issues involved, see Abrahamsson, K., Nilsson, O., & Rubenson, K., "Recurrent Education--Ideals and Realities in the Swedish System of Higher Education," paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Higher Education at Lancaster, 1978; cf. also Abramsson, K. (ed.), Högskola for återkommande utbildning (UHÄ-rapport 1978: 20, National Board of Universities and Colleges).

Apart from the sources cited in the sequel, our assessment of reform implementation draws heavily upon discussions with people within the various evaluation projects, and also upon some of the draft reports produced so far.

[14] Such efforts have occurred at least in the case of the Conservative Party, and the Social Democrats and the LO (the blue-collar union) jointly.

[15] It is of some interest to note that representatives of the northern region were pressing for regional boards very early in the reform process--and that their conception of the role of the boards was then much more "activist" than the later adopted official policy.

[16] See Premfors & Östergren, op. cit., chapter 6 on "Autonomy"; cf. also Jan-Erik Lane, University Autonomy--A New Analysis (University of Umeå: Center for Administrative Studies: Working Paper no. 6, 1977).

[17] Cf. Premfors & Östergren, op. cit., pp. 95-104; see also Jan-Erik Lane, The Budgetary System of Swedish Higher Education (University of Umeå: Center for Administrative Studies: Working Paper no. 3, 1976); and Högskolan. Anslagsframställning för budgetåret 1979/80 (UHÄ-rapport 1978: 15, National Board of Universities and Colleges; hereafter cited as "Högskolan"), esp. pp. 26-28.

[18] Högskolan, op. cit., p. 59; cf. also Premfors & Östergren, op. cit., pp. 38-41.

[19] The most recent statistics are provided in Högskolan, op. cit., pp. 52-56; and in Antagning till grundläggande högskoleutbildning: snabbstatistik (National Board of Universities and Colleges: 1978).

[20] For an an analysis similar to ours, see the report by the education committee of the Parliament, Utbildningsutskottets betänkande 1977/78: 22, p. 17.

[21] Lillemor Kim, "A New General Admissions Policy" in Innovation in Access to Higher Education (New York: International Council for Educational Development, 1978), pp. 303-324; also Premfors & Östergren, op. cit., pp. 104-109.

[22] Lillemor Kim and Dorothée Simon, Tillträde till högskolan (UHÄ-rapport, 1978: 6, National Board of Universities and Colleges), esp. pp. 71-72.

[23] For a summary of the reports, see Regeringens proposition 1977/79: 100. Bilaga 12, pp. 383-384.

[24] An English summary of the commission's report exists in mimeographed form: Report of the Swedish Commission on post-graduate education: Summary (Ministry of Education: 1977).

[25] That is, if the priorities of the National Board of Universities and Colleges are accepted. See Forskningsplanering och forskningsorganisation (UHÄ-rapport 1978: 12, National Board of Universities and Colleges), pp. 68-73; and also Högskolan, op. cit., pp. 42-45.

[26] See Premfors & Östergren, op. cit., pp. 68-74 for an assessment of the role of ad hoc commissions in higher education planning.

[27] Anders Borg & Torbjörn Larsson, Regeringsskiftet 1976: Personer, utredningar, propositioner (University of Stockholm, Department of Political Science: Research Report no. 1977: 2).

[28] A special incentive to try such a solution was provided by the fact that the three coalition parties had an agreement on quotas for representation on commissions; consequently, if a party wanted to diminish the influence of its coalition partners, and it controlled the ministry in question, the best thing was to refrain from creating a full-scale commission . . .

29 That task was given to Bertil Östergren, advisor to the National Board of Universities and Colleges. He was also a former chairman of the National Union of Students (SFS). However, during 1978 the student leaders have grown increasingly hostile toward the solution outlined in the reform bill of 1977. The ensuing negotiations will in all probability be very tough.

30 See the study cited in footnote 27. The two commissions with modified terms of reference were concerned with respectively student aid and statistics for higher education.

31 The commission on post-graduate training was transformed into a commission on "cooperation in research." Its prime task is to propose measures that will further contacts between Swedish industry and higher education institutions.

32 In spite of the following pre-election statement, the head of the unit for higher education within the Ministry did not resign: "I find it impossible to be at the same time active within the Social Democratic Party and one of the closest advisers of a non-socialist minister. My political work will be given priority." Interview with Johnny Andersson, Veckans Affärer, No. 24, July 1, 1976.

33 One such instance was the appointment of Professor Olof Ruin, political scientist and member of the Social Democratic Party, to the post of deputy chancellor and planning director of the National Board of Universities and Colleges.

34 For English summaries of the two reports, see the publication cited in footnote 24 above, and Research Policy in Sweden (the summary of the report by the Commission on the research councils, Stockholm: 1978).

35 See Forskningsplanering och forskningsorganisation, op. cit., pp. 78-81.

36 Carl Tham, the former party secretary, is a good example. An active student politician, he was the Liberal representative in U68. There he developed the arguments which became party policy in relation to the U68 proposals: they would mainly imply bureaucratization of higher education and they had very little to do with the really important problems of quality facing higher education.

Björn Molin, political scientist from the University of Gothenburg, is another case in point. He was the Liberal spokesman on higher education from 1973 up to the 1976 elections, ending up as we have seen, very close to Conservative policy.

It may also be noted that of the fourteen new Liberal MPs in 1976, twelve had some kind of higher education; three were university teachers and/or researchers.

37 A perfect illustration of the differences between the then official party spokesman, Björn Molin, and Jörgen Ullenhag is provided through their answers to an identical set of questions in the Liberal ideological journal Liberal Debatt, 1975: 2, pp. 40-43.

38 Riksdagens protokoll, May 24, 1978 (Jan-Erik Wikström); cf. also Regeringens proposition 1977/78: 100. Bilaga 12, pp. 367-371.

39 Riksdagens protokoll, May 24, 1978 (Jörgen Ullenhag); see also Gaudeamus, no. 8, Sept. 20, 1978, p. 4.

40 See Bo Lindensjö, The Politicization of Swedish Higher Educational Planning--Some Views on Causes, Forms, and Effects, paper prepared for the Joint ECPR/IMHE Workshop on "University Governance: Policies, Problems and Performance," Paris, 8-10 May, 1978, pp. 15-16.

41 Almost needless to say, "research policy" falls in a separate, though considerably overlapping, policy arena compared to "higher education policy." In our view, however, this overlap plus the very character of the current policy discussion justify our way of treating the problem. Besides, evidently "(t)he substantive boundaries of a policy arena are normally fluid" (L.E. Gladieux & T.R. Wolanin, Congress and the Colleges. The National Politics of Higher Education, Lexington: 1976, p. 252.).

42 See, for example, Saco-tidningen, September 1977, for a number of articles based inter alia on research performed by Saco/SR (the national federation for professionals and people with academic degrees) on the recruitment and predicament of research students.

43 Peter Stevrin, Den samhällsstyrda forskningen: En samhällsorienterad studie av den sektoriella forskningspolitikens framväxt och tillämpning i Sverige (Stockholm: 1978).

44 See, for example, Högskolan, op. cit., p. 13.

45 The increase suggested by the Social Democrats amounted to about 50 mill. Sw. Crs., distributed to universities, research councils, etc. To put this figure in perspective, we may mention that the grant for "research and researcher training" in higher education institutions is close to one billion Sw. Crs., and that the research councils receive a grant in the order of 300 mill., both in fiscal year 1978/79.

46 See, for example, Riksdagens protokoll, May 24, 1978 (Arne Gadd).

47 Perhaps the most conspicuous illustration so far is an editorial in the ideological journal of the Social Democratic Party, entitled "Crisis at the Universities?" (Tiden, 1977: 10). Essentially, it is argued that the party has been too preoccupied with equality in higher education to the detriment of excellence. The working classes need the best expertise they can have. Social equality is best furthered by measures affecting lower levels of education and more structural aspects of Swedish society such as wealth distribution.

INSTITUTION FOR SOCIAL AND POLICY STUDIES

The mission of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies (ISPS) is to encourage and undertake multidisciplinary research and education. The ISPS is oriented to the exploration of social problems rather than to the refinement of discipline-based methodology. In recent years, ISPS research has focused on the problems of the city, education, health service delivery, and on the modeling of social systems. Currently, research is also being developed on criminal justice, governmental reform, environment, income distribution, aging, the policy-making process, and value problems in public policy. ISPS is not a consulting organization but an instrument for enriching the social sciences and related disciplines in the University.

Higher Education Research Group
Institution for Social and Policy Studies
1732 Yale Station (36 Mansfield Street)
New Haven, Connecticut 06520